THE DEARTH OF CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE IMPACT OF NGOS' AGENDA AND CONDITIONALITIES ON CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the agenda and conditionalities of donor agencies which are typically subsumed under the euphemisms of terms such as development, women/children's rights and democracy among others, focusing on how they affect cultural sustainability and sustainable development in Zimbabwe. The article is based on the data gathered from selected cultural communities in the Midlands, Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces of Zimbabwe which supposedly benefit from the programs conducted by the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The focus is on the NGOs agenda as well as the conditionalities attached to the aid. This article takes a cultural dimension to the debate on the problems of NGOs in the developing world which hitherto, has largely been political and economical. It valorizes the need for self-determination of the communities which supposedly benefit from foreign aid distributed through NGOs in Zimbabwe. The argument in this article is based on the cultural conservatism theory, a philosophy which is premised on the self-determination, autonomy and cultural freedom of the communities in Zimbabwe. Hence, the argument this paper raises is that the agenda and conditionalities of the NGOs in Zimbabwe are developed without the dialogic involvement of the community members such that they are predetermined and judgmental. Considering the importance of culture in development, both as a resource and in defining the concept of development, the argument pursued in this article is that the prescriptive NGOs' agenda and conditionalities are inimical to cultural sustainability and ultimately sustainable development in Zimbabwe. This argument is premised on the preservation and safeguarding of the cultural capital of the Zimbabwean cultural communities in the implementation of sustainable development programmes by NGOs.

Keywords: sustainable development, NGOs' agenda, conditionalities, cultural capital, cultural sustainability.

INTRODUCTION: NGOS IN ZIMBABWE: ISSUES AND CONTEXT

The post-2000 period in Zimbabwe is epitomised by varied contestations at both local and international level which apparently became obvious in assorted manifestations which are largely political in character. As a reaction to that occurrence, there is a growing body of literature on these contestations by scholars from various disciplines. Against this background, the impetus of this article stems from the wrangle between the then ZANU-PF government and the civic society in the period prior to the highly contentious general elections of the year 2008. During the aforementioned period, the Zimbabwean scenario somewhat resembles serious antagonism between seemingly opposing but complimentary entities which are the government of Zimbabwe and the NGOs in Zimbabwe. This antagonism reached an upsurge which culminated in the temporal closure of all NGOs in the year 2008 amid a hot-tempered political chapter. Obviously, this prohibition was received with resentment in other circles particularly the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe who survived on food handouts from some of these organisations during this period. This action seemed illogical in a country which was by

that time in need of relief services in form of food aid and other basic assistance. Retrospectively, this was not the first instance in which the government of Zimbabwe fell out with the NGOs. Prior to that, the NGOs had been deregistered and later on made to register under new regulations in the year 2007, an issue which was heavily castigated as being excessive interference on the civil society.

As mentioned earlier on, the discourse marking the government-NGOs contestations in Zimbabwe was largely political with the NGOs being branded neo-colonial agencies. Politics aside, this article however focuses on the fault-lines marking the activities of the NGOs based in Zimbabwe from a cultural dimension. This is not to say that NGOs are outright detrimental organisms, but questions are raised on the construction of their agenda and their subsequent effects on cultural sustainability and sustainable development Zimbabwe. The problem is on the congruence of the NGOs' agenda and conditionalities with the indigenous Zimbabwean cultures which are inevitably cultural capital which is supposed to be sustained for sustainable development in Zimbabwe (Mpofu, 2009). Though this article leans on theoretical arguments on the problems of foreign aid, the major arguments developed here are based on the empirical data collected from selected cultural communities in Midlands, Matabeleland South and Masvingo provinces in Zimbabwe where NGOs such as Girl Child Network, Care International, World Vision and Musasa Project, MASO are conducting various projects. The study area, as described in the foregoing is represented in the map below.
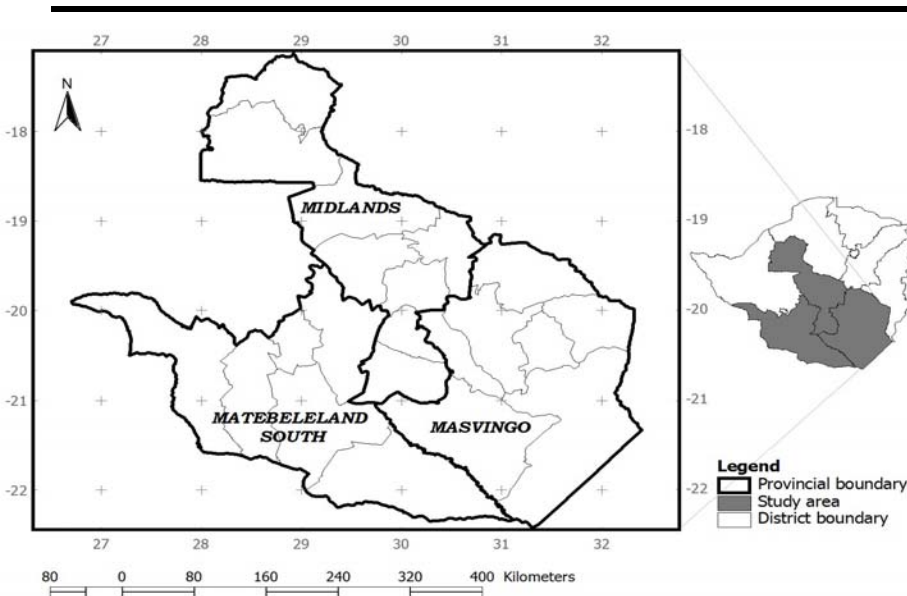
NGOs and Politics: A Raging Debate

It is imperative to explicate the trivia and politics marking NGOs' activities in Africa as a background to the analysis of the NGOs agenda and conditionalities and their impact on cultural sustainability and sustainable development in Zimbabwe. NGOs are defined as "private, self-governing, voluntary, non-profit distributing organizations operating, not for commercial purposes, but in public interest, for the promotion of social welfare and development, religion, charity, education and research" (Development Resource Centre: 1993, cited in Swilling and Russell, 2002:4). This explanation suggests that these organisations exist for simply good reasons. The NGOs are simply conduits for donations from independent donors which may be individuals, organisations or even countries. For instance, United States of America assistance reaches Africa through a variety of channels, which include USAID (Dagne, 2006:2). At this juncture, it is important to note that the donors to the NGOs in Zimbabwe are exclusively external and predominantly western. This validates the point that these organisations are not at all autonomous or necessarily non-governmental (Petras, 1997). This is because the NGOs are always funded by foreign donors, a situation which obtains in Zimbabwe. This lack of independence of NGOs is the source for the prescriptive agenda and conditionalities. In this situation, 'he who pays the piper dictates the tune' validates the interrogation of the invisible hand in the construction of NGOs agenda and conditionalities and the effects they render to cultural sustainability and sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

This is not to say NGOs are a menace to the cultural communities of Zimbabwe since there is evidence that NGOs are increasingly considered important in bringing about other aspects of rural social change which include serving as agents in the creation of civil societies and good governance, fostering democratic and alternative approaches to mainstream development policy and practice (Riley, 2002:66). The problem is on the unilateral direction of foreign aid flows which makes the developed world the benchmark of development, such that the NGOs confront the Zimbabwean cultural communities with predetermined development approaches. This state of affairs demonstrates the fact that the NGOs agenda are not at all indigenous.

There are various arguments that have been raised in a wide range of scholarship on the problems and insincerity of foreign aid (Shivji, 2006; Boulding and Hyde, 2004). In this body of literature, the over-arching argument is that that there is a unilateral flow of aid from the First world to the Third world countries, an implicit appreciation of the fact that the source of foreign aid are the developed countries. There is also recognition that the motivation for giving aid is not necessarily altruistic, rather over and above the humanitarian motives; aid is given for a variety of political, strategic, and economic reasons (Riddell, 1996). This scholar gives an illustration of Israel which happens to be the largest cumulative recipient of US foreign assistance owing to the long standing strong bilateral relations between Israel and the United States of America and the shared strategic goals in the Middle East especially concerning supposed Islamic extremism. More so, these two countries also share the same democratic values; and historic ties dating back to USA's support for the creation of Israel in 1948. This nullifies the argument raised earlier on that aid is basically altruistic and beneficial to the developing nations.

Therefore, though, it can be envisaged that foreign aid is supposed to be beneficial to the cultural communities of Zimbabwe, the foregoing has shown that this can be contested. It has been exhibited in the foregoing that foreign aid is almost always political and aid giving is not necessarily altruistic. A close look at foreign aid indicates that the self-interest of the donor rather than philanthropic motivation often motivates such programs

since the NGOs come to Zimbabwe with predetermined programmes and always give conditionalities in the provision of aid. Conditionalities are the conditions which are set by the donor countries or organisations which are supposed to be met by the aid recipients if they are to constantly access aid. To buttress this view, Boulding and Hyde (2004:3) claim that rarely is foreign aid given without strings attached. These conditionalities as they have been applied to Zimbabwe include democracy and good governance; as well as aligning the NGOs agenda with the interests of the donor(s). For instance, aid agencies regularly make threats to the recipient countries stating that their aid will be lessened or suspended unless they use the funds only for the intended purpose.

However, just like the predetermined agenda, these conditionalities deprive the recipient countries of their autonomy and fundamental rights to exercise self-determination in making decisions. Therefore, this carrot and stick method which is shown by the existence of conditionalities compromises the cultural freedoms of communities in Zimbabwe. As a result, the Zimbabwean people are becoming cultural clones of the aid givers through adopting the Western crafted development paradigms as shown by the NGOs' agenda. This is because the development discourse in the NGOs in Zimbabwe appears to be dogmatic and inclined to Western forms of development as demonstrated by their agendas and conditionalities.

THE DEARTH OF CULTURAL CAPITAL IN UNIVERSAL MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT

The socio-cultural argument for the maintenance of cultural capital and cultural sustainability for sustainable development in Zimbabwe is informed by the cultural conservatism theory, a thinking which was popularized by Edmund Burke (Lind and Marshner, 1988). It is a philosophy which supports the preservation of the heritage of a particular culture, thus valorising the cultural capital of a nation. Unlike the transformation of communities which has gained currency in the development discourse which is alien to Zimbabwe in the form of gender issues, gay/lesbian rights, women/children rights among others, Burke insists that change is supposed to be organic. That is, the change in the heritage of a particular community is supposed to be endogenous and not imposed on a cultural grouping. This is because at the core of the concept of culture is tradition which is a determinant of other peripheral cultural aspects. This is recognition of the relativity of culture and the view that the soundness or intelligibility, of any set of categories of thought is relative to its time, place or context of origin (Wiredu, 2004:12).

What is fundamental to this philosophy is that, old institutions have adapted to a particular places, cultures and environments and therefore they are supposed to be conserved for sustainability purposes. This suggests that communities have a right to their cultural norms and traditions. For that reason, the NGOs' prescriptive agendas and conditionalities are supposed to be critiqued from a cultural dimension. Surprisingly, the West on behalf of the African communities or of themselves or both they do not hesitate to make universal claims (Wiredu, 2004). This argument is against the idea of universalizing development which is evident in the NGOs' agenda in Zimbabwe, since the agendas are set without dialogically involving the communities. The general idea behind such universal models seems to be an understanding that the use of the same pattern, including institutions and processes of development, can lead to similar positive consequences in each country disregarding the multiplicity of cultures in the world. Thus, some NGOs' recommendations on development can easily be biased toward their own limited experience of their home countries, false assumptions or taken from the experiences of few countries.

The thesis of this article therefore is premised on need to appreciate cultural diversity and the reliance on the tried and tested traditional institutions which are cultural capital needed for sustainable development. In line with this thought, NGOs in Zimbabwe should have broad comparative knowledge of their target cultural communities. It is strange to note that there is a tendency to claim that needs studies are carried out by some of these NGOs in Zimbabwe when in actual no such a thing happen, thereby disregarding divergences between the NGOs' agenda and indigenous cultures of Zimbabwe. This clearly shows the prescriptive and undemocratic nature of foreign aid conditionalities and agenda which is a reality in Zimbabwe. The community members do not have a prerogative to identify and decide precisely on what they want from the NGOs so as to avoid one size fits all solutions which endanger the cultural system of the communities, which is the cultural capital necessary for sustainable development.

CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This section demonstrates the intricate relationship between culture and sustainable development which is well documented in scholarship. Oyeneye and Shoremi (1985: 3) outline the outstanding features of culture as its collectiveness in that it is shared by members of a society; it is historically derived and transmitted from one generation to another; and it is created through the process of adjustment to the social setting. In this account, it can be noted that the culture of a people is shaped by the environment and context an indication that what makes a particular cultural community exist may not apply in another cultural community. This suggestion indicates the importance of culture in the existence of humankind; both as a resource and as a tool for adaptability of the people to their particular situations.

Therefore, the survival strategies, tastes, the socio-economic and political structures of communities are bound to be different. This is the basis for questioning the universality of the NGOs' agenda and conditionalities, precisely their development paradigms. The agenda of the NGOs in Zimbabwe which include women rights, children rights, agriculture, gays and lesbianism; alongside the conditions for the provision of funds by donors such as the existence of democracy, rule of law and 'appropriate' agenda among other themes are all carried out in the name of development. Yet, the term development itself is a multifaceted one with varying requirements and goals. It is a multi-dimensional process involving a national condition of life from unsatisfactory to satisfactory. The World Commission for Culture and Development (1996) gives two views of development. According to one view, development is a process of economic growth, a rapid and sustained expansion of production, productivity and income per head. The other view as holds that, development is seen as a process that enhances the effective freedom of the people involved to pursue whatever they have reason to value. The latter is recognition of the need for autonomy and self-determination of cultural communities which is difficult to attain when the agenda of NGOs are set without the involvement of the people living in these communities.

The argument therefore is that the cultural issues are critically important for development (Sen, 1999). If development can be seen as enhancement of the living standards of people, then efforts geared for development can hardly ignore the world of culture. It is important to note that culture can be either a resource to development or a determinant of development. The economic and social changes in pursuit of development can certainly influence positively or negatively the cultural pursuits and vice versa. Thus, any development task would be unsuccessful if it does not have roots in a people's culture (Mbakogu, 2004). In this view, Ake

(1996:125) argues that development is the "process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilization in accordance with their choices and values." This implies that development is supposed to be something that people must do for themselves and also this testifies also why there are varying descriptions of the term development.

Therefore, no culture can be regarded as a benchmark from which others can be evaluated. According to Sen (1999) there is a link between development and culture and the connection relate both to the ends and to the means of development. This declaration can be interpreted to represent two convoluted aspects connecting culture and development, which are the meaning or definition of development and the resources or process of development. These are matters which can only be determined agreeably within the context of a single culture. Drawing an all inclusive definition of development and the supposed development strategies might be deceptive. In summary, culture shapes what we mean by development and determines how that development can be realized. That is, man is the means and the end of development (Mbakogu, 2004). For that reason it must be emphasized that man's development is enhanced when he is socially and culturally fulfilled. Hence, development divorced from its human or cultural context is growth without soul (World Commission on Culture and Development, 1996).

In this vein, Petra (1997:219) and Sen (1999) trace the astonishing economic success of Japan which has transformed from a formally backward economy into one of the most prosperous nations in the world in less than a century. According to these scholars, Japan's success is attributed to the core elements of the Japanese culture which are based on Confucianism. Furthermore, Japan as a nation managed to shut out the western world as part of its ethos. According to Sen, it can be argued that the Japanese values have changed only a little, but the same ethical values as they were in the old tradition have not been substantially altered in a fast changing world. Because, Japan's old value system still has its usefulness in the contemporary Japanese society, the Japan economy constantly breaks new ground, overtaking older economies with longer history of modernity.

In the recent years, development discourse has assumed a paradigm shift, the move that focuses on the ability of development strategies to provide for the needs of the world's current population without damaging the ability of future generations to provide for their own. Thus today's decisions are made with considerations of sustaining the same activities and benefits in the long term future. This is basically doing something with the long term in mind. This is what is called sustainable development. World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) entitled *Our Common Future* defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The core philosophy of this development thought is to resolve the dilemmas of the past destructive development methods which failed to put into account the long term aims of social equity and environmental balance. Culture is a critical pillar of sustainable development as it allows greater diversity in development policy. In effect, this paradigm shift is non-deterministic approach that breaks out of universalistic and dependency-creating development thinking. Rather it promotes self-reliance, social justice and natural balance for cultural groups in their natural settings.

The arguments in this article buttress the issue of culture as a key topic in discussions of development and also sustainability of that development in Zimbabwe. Approaches to development that take into account matters of

culture have the potential to transform communities and individuals in positive and meaningful ways over the long term unlike what is witnessed in the NGOs agenda and conditionalities. Entirely imported forms of development approaches which are merely aspects from other cultures do undermine other cultures and are not sustainable in the long term. This can be attributed to the incompatibility of the developmental projects supported by foreign donors with the physical, social, political and cultural climate in Zimbabwe. Thus culture is an important pillar in sustainable development. At this point, I argue that culture in simple terms is not only the pillar of sustainable development but also the ability of the cultural communities in Zimbabwe to maintain the same cultural elements which forms the cultural capital from one generation to the next, thus cultural sustainability. Cultural sustainability means that change occurs in a way that respects cultural values and cultural capital of a people. Cultural sustainability pivots on detailed exploration of the particular complexities of each situation, and preservation of the environment and of culture, of course balancing with considerations of current practices in the world.

Cultural capital is essential for sustainable development in cultural communities since there are firm relationships which exist between culture and the development. From a policy viewpoint, as an illustration the government of Canada, the *Agenda 21 for Culture*, and the UNESCO's *Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)* takes cultural development as connected to social policy and goals such as promotion of social inclusion, cultural diversity, rural diversity, rural revitalization, public housing, health, ecological preservation, and sustainable development. This shows how important cultural sustainability is in sustainable development to the effect that it warrants attention in policy making pronouncements at macro-level. Development that takes into account cultural sustainability promotes sustainable communities and this respects the history and character of those existing features that nurture a sense of attachment to, and familiarity with a place and its environment. It can be noted that the argument for cultural sustainability in NGOs' operations resonates the same sentiments of the struggle against cultural imperialism which characterizes the postcolonial African societies. It is the sum of processes by which African communities rejects the shaping of social institutions or even the promotion of values and structures of dominating centre of the system of foreign aid disbursement. Foreign aid agencies, therefore should understand that African culture has got an absolute difference from that of the West in varying formalistic and thematic expressions; in fact there are simply divergent ideological formations which need to be appreciated. Ultimately, the agenda and conditionalities of the NGOs should take into account the cultures of the recipient communities. This can be enhanced by the minimisation or avoidance of conditional aid and consideration of community involvement in the formulation of donor agenda. Thus, the community should have the prerogative to identify its own needs to which the funds can be utilised, as opposed to the imposition of models of development.

There is lack of a stern policy in Zimbabwe on the monitoring of NGOs to make sure that they work within the confinements of the cultural frameworks of the communities in the country. The NGOs' accountability is directed upwards to the donors and yet it should be redirected downwards to rural communities. This is vital for the implementation of democratic and participatory development. Hence, development and sustainable development are elaborate phenomena which are culturally, situational, and institutionally entrenched such that they can be delicate if universalistic and 'one solution fits all' paradigms are promoted. Dogmatic approaches to development and NGOs' judgmental agenda threaten the cultural frameworks of Zimbabwean cultural communities.

A CULTURAL DIMENSION TO THE PROBLEMS OF NGOS' AGENDA IN ZIMBABWE

Sponsored Activism: Women/Children Rights, Gender and Culture Issues in Zimbabwe

One of the key result areas marking the agenda of NGOs in Zimbabwe concerns the advocacy and lobbying issues. The Musasa Project, World Vision International and Girl Child Network are testimony to this avowal. It was noted that in organisation of this form, the advocacy and lobby departments have become mouth pieces of the girl child, women, and the communities as they lobby for policy and law reform in Zimbabwe. The unfortunate part of this drive is that what is being lobbied for is not endogenous, rather it is a case of sponsored activism since the driving force behind the employees of these organisations who have become 'activists' is the availability of funds from donors and not the passion to help the communities. It is fateful to note that these organisations claim that they speak on behalf of their clients yet it is themselves driven by the prescriptive agenda of the donors since each and every organisation has got predetermined purposes in the communities. It was noted that the advocacy and lobby program is the most difficult to implement in Zimbabwe due to cultural problems which include language barriers and the campaigning for aspects which are alien to the indigenous cultures.

The ultimate result of the advocacy and lobby endeavour in the NGOs fraternity is supposed to be policy and law change. In this regard, on its website the Musasa Project boasts on its contribution on the enactment of the *Domestic Violence Act* in 2006 as a milestone to the organisation's activities. They regard it as a significant step forward for organisations working with violence against women in Zimbabwe. They also stress on the contentious but dormant *Legal Age of Majority Act* of 1982 regardless of its continued existence with nominal application for a substantial period. It was exposed during fieldwork that *Domestic Violence Act* as a statutory instrument undermines the culture of the Zimbabwean cultural communities in a number of respects. It is nauseating to notice that the marital issues which have always been private matters as enshrined in the Shona proverb *'chakafukidza dzimba matenga'* especially marital issues have been pushed into the public horizons because of such ominous laws. Aptly speaking, the Act gives women rights which are culturally unacceptable which do not absolutely build sustainable homes. Furthermore, the role of the traditional leadership in dealing with 'domestic' crimes has been diminished since such issues are now presided in courts of law or incongruous personnel at organisations in such as the Musasa Project.

This exposé points to the ensuing clash of the law and culture. In this vein, Cotterrell (2004) explains the relationship between law and culture. Encompassed in the idea of culture is actually the content of different types of social relations and the networks in which they exist. Therefore, the conflict that exists between law and culture emanates from the notion that culture has its own values and laws to express from which they originate. The consequence is that legal theory must, it seems, now systematically take account of the notion of culture. Therefore, "legal theory requires a sociologically-informed concept of community" (Cotterrell, 2004:18). However, the laws that are being advocated for by these NGOs in Zimbabwe do not consider the cultural values obtaining in the Zimbabwean cultural communities.

Though the Musasa Project is professed to be a Zimbabwean organization founded in 1988 to reform institutions that perpetuate violence against women through developing strategies that assist in combating subordination of women, its agenda and funding is not at all Zimbabwean. The organisation has adopted an increasingly radical feminist agenda for cultural change in Zimbabwe. It is an agenda which challenges

existing values and represents an alternative view in Zimbabwe. The personnel at this organisation are predominantly women, an indication of the extent of the entrenched radicalism against men obtainable in the organisation's philosophy on gender issues. It is an organisation which is said to deal with gender issues, however, typical of these gender based organisations operating in Zimbabwe, they have misconstrued the term 'gender' to mean 'women' a signification of the activist onslaught on the branded patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean society. Zimbabwe is a collection of so many ethnic groups, and the fact that all these groupings resemble the so called male dominance is not accident. This agenda is not at all endogenous, but very exotic. Though as part of its agenda, the organization have got seemingly good issues as part of its agenda the major problem is that the problems identified are products of judgements based on Western cultural gender relations and even the solutions provided to the problems are not rooted in the cultures of Zimbabwe.

Let alone, the funds which created and are sustaining the Musasa Project as an organisation and its agenda are in every respect external. This organisation thrives on donations from United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) which is an international development agency that promote the right of every women, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. It is also funded by MS Zimbabwe which is an appendage of the Danish Association for International Co-operation which has got the promotion of gender equality as part of its business; Oxfam Canada; Oxfam Great Britain, and SIDA Australia. A close analysis on these organisations shows that Canada, Australia, Denmark and Great Britain are the donor countries to the cause of the Musasa Project something which any serious mind cannot ignore. Explicit and conspicuous in the foregoing discussion is the correspondences that exist between the Musasa Project's agenda and its donors which is not a coincidence. This is because, for the organisation to access the funds, the Musasa project employees produce project proposals which comply with the donors' interests which is a conditionality in the exact sense of the word for them to access the funds. Any proposals which do not conform to the course of action of the donors will not attract any funding. This is an indication of the adverse relationship between NGOs and their donors which Hulme and Edwards (1997) consider to be too close for comfort.

Cultural Extension through NGOs in Zimbabwe

The NGOs in Zimbabwe have become active agents for cultural extension in the political, economic, social and spiritual aspects of human life. Though there are aid agencies which are offering compassionate assistance to the cultural communities in Zimbabwe in the areas of food aid, education, and HIV/AIDS, some NGOs' agenda are simply judgments by donor countries on the Zimbabwean cultural communities aimed at dislodging the indigenous cultures. Such agenda include the issues of human/women rights, homosexuality and lesbianism, gender, and children rights. In this regard, the question on the inappropriateness of radical feminist agendas in Africa, Zimbabwe in particular cannot be overemphasised as this has been debated in a wide African scholarship. Feminism is just but an ideology and not a culture (Matambirofa, 2006:95). For that reason it should be noted that gender loyalties are to a great extent subordinated to one's cultural heritage. "If pushed any further beyond this threshold the ideology runs the risk of erroneously making one size fits all feminist straightjacket claims"(Matambirofa, ibid). What this implies is that feminist ideas are impositions of a foreign culture and its values by insisting on promoting gender equity. In any case the term gender has been misconstrued to mean women thereby projecting men as criminals and women as victims in the gender debate. Instead, organisations in the mould of Musasa Project and Girl Child Network should realise that social roles

have specific purposes and their meanings and interpretations have to be sought in the relevant socio-cultural context of practice.

Girl Child Network (GCN) is an NGO which is aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of the girl child and to support the economic, political, social and cultural empowerment of the girl child in order for her to assert those rights in the home, school and community. The organisation also advocates for laws and policies that minimise what it considers gender based violence, something which is to some extent similar to Musasa Project's agenda. It also campaign and lobby for total elimination of what it perceives to be harmful cultural practices that impede the full development of the girl child. The claim of the existence of harmful cultural practices in the Zimbabwean cultural communities is absolutely judgemental and rejection of cultural plurality. Thus, though the founder of the organisation is Zimbabwean, the sources of funds and agenda makes her part of the cultural change movement in Zimbabwe. It is astonishing to note that the aim of this agenda is to dismantle the so called culturally held gender stereotypes through a variety of public outreach campaigns. It can be envisaged in the foregoing that the initiative is to change cultural beliefs and substituting them with western culture. This jeopardizes cultural sustainability and sustainable social development in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, there are other NGOs which are aimed at expanding the Christian religion. The Zimbabwean cultural communities are considered to have no form of spirituality or inferior religion than Christianity which has since triumphed over local customs and indigenous knowledge in Zimbabwe. Its posture is one of superiority to all traditions. Against this background, 'faith based NGOs such as World Vision International, Christian Care appear to be surrogates of the early missionaries in Zimbabwe in the spreading of the Christian faith, by instilling Christian values through whatever means possible. For example the program Channels of Hope implemented by World Vision International in Matabeleland in 2009 aimed at training of pastors, an exercise dubbed the 'training of trainers' where they were educated as opinion leaders. This programme was targeting the opinion leaders who would then influence the ordinary people in their respective areas. This is a reflection of the rejection of the role of spirituality in sustainable development. Be that as it may, Mbiti (1969:2) argues that traditional African religions permeate all developments of life such that, there is no strict division between the sacred and the worldly or between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. Wherever the African is, there is his religion. For that reason, "it is doubtful that Christianity could provide a blueprint for organising African societies: those teachings are irrelevant because they do not speak meaningfully to the religious, social, political and philosophical foundations on which the social institutions are constructed (p'Bitek, 1986).

The other form of cultural extension is witnessed in the child sponsorship programmes by SOS Children's Home and World Vision International in Matabeleland which are merely cultural extensions in the raising of the African child. For example, the SOS Children's Home has programmes which tend to focus on one child in a family who is said to be vulnerable, or a family among families. Similarly, World Vision has got child sponsorship programs where the field officers help the sponsors in the identification of the children they can sponsor while they are in their Western home countries by sending photographs to the United States. The selected child is then sponsored in almost everything by the 'foreign parent'. The sponsor who is also now a 'parent' communicates with the 'new child'. The nature of the interaction between the sponsor and the child reveals that Child sponsorship programme is a new-fangled form of child adoption since the sponsor can visit

the child and when he sends the money it will be having conditions. The role of the real parent is displaced, which might be the source of problems in the real family in the future. As a result the feeling of the child ends up being that he/she has since found a new and more responsible parent. More so, the approaches of World Vision International and SOS Children's Home in child caring, cultivates the spirit of individualism. However, as far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life circumstances (Adewole, 1990:160). This shows that there is close link between the society and the individual to the rest of the society, in simple terms no person is a free agent. This is supported by Wiredu (2004:18) who says that African ethics are of a communalistic kind, the interests of the individual are placed in a reciprocal adjustment with the interests of the community with reference to many specific circumstances of life. Therefore, the cultural shift which has been exposed here is that of communalistic society to individualistic systems of the perceptions and relations in the communities which is alien and problematic to the Zimbabwean cultural communities.

The other issue which is topical, in the day-to-day business of Musasa Project and Girl Child Network which connects with the discussion in the previous paragraph is the issue of human rights. Musasa Project gives emphasis on the women rights, while Girl Child Network focuses on children rights which inadvertently are women rights since the focus is on the girl child. Nevertheless, the formulation of human rights standards and their enforcement mechanism and procedures are fraught with controversy. What is meant by human rights is the set of normative standards enshrined in the International Bill of Rights, as composed of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other human rights instruments. However, like in most of the international formulations, the Western nations play a leading role in their promulgation, but they have a universal value in their application. In this light, it is evident in the Zimbabwean cultural communities that the issue of individual rights- women or children has caused the disintegration of families, yet the family is a key institution in the African societies and the starting point in human development.

The Contravention of the Social Structures Sustaining Communities in Zimbabwe

The selection and recruitment system of the employees engaged by the NGOs in Zimbabwe gives careful attention to the educational qualifications of the applicants. Such that the majority of field officers who happen to be in contact with the recipient communities are in possession of at least a diploma or a degree in the disciplines of education or other humanities. They are also predominantly young and unmarried. However, though they lack wisdom from experience by the standards of the Zimbabwean cultural communities, they are engaged in various programs in their respective organisations which include counselling, teaching, instructing, training, and performing other leadership roles depending on the programmes they facilitate. Some of the programs include sex education which might include activities like condom use demonstrations in the case of World Vision International, Musasa Project, and MASO as well as marriage counselling at Musasa Project. This is testimony to the point that, the role of the African child is changing because he is now a counsellor just because he has got academic qualifications, yet they were supposed to be taught themselves by the elderly who have the practical knowledge acquired through experience. This is a reflection of the inappropriateness of some of the programmes implemented by the NGOs in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, sex education to the children of school going age exposes the children into the world they did not know thereby creating a condition of

inquisitiveness and the idea of experimenting which may put their life at risk. This reflects on the inappropriateness of the mentor to the subject, situation, and the audience. This is in sharp contrast of the setting of the traditional Shona/Ndebele communities which had proactive and organised systems of education with regards to the socialisation of the child. Sex education was part of the knowledge which was acquired by young people proactively and not reactionary in preparation of adulthood and marriage. The instruction was continuous unlike what is now done by the NGOs where it is taught at prearranged workshops to react to the problems affecting the societies. Through *kuraya/kuraira*, [advising] girls are given continuous instruction to care for themselves as little women (Mutswairo, 1996).

Though it is noble for NGOs to assist in solving problems bedevilling the communities, it is worth noting that there is a marked degree of ignorance of the elements in the core (traditional) culture which can direct the present generation in the implementation of the same kind of the education. For instance, in the traditional Shona culture, sex education to the young boys was done by the grandfather (paternal or maternal) *(sekuru)* who was responsible for warning them to maintain their chastity into marriage, likewise the young girls were groomed by the aunt *(vatete)* and grandmother *(ambuya)* to be chaste until they get married (Gelfand, 1979). From this discussion, it has been revealed that the facilitation of the socialisation of the child in the Shona society was done by mature and established people with wisdom accumulated over a long period. It was done as an incessant process as the child grows up. It was also done at designated places and not in the classroom. Therefore, it is the question of the aptness on the part of the facilitator, time and setting which made the system to function efficiently. This is what lacks in the organisations such as the Musasa project, World Vision and Girl Child Network where programmes are crafted and executed without the consideration of the age and experience of the facilitator, the setting and time of the implementation. It is a fact that, the traditional setting cannot be reproduced in its unadulterated form because of the notable changes that has taken place in post-independent Zimbabwe.

However, the crafting of similar programmes in the contemporary society can be done taking a cue from the traditional culture. The demise of the social morality of the indigenous culture can be attributed to the alienation of the Zimbabweans from their culture through some NGOs agenda which disregards the cultural capital of the cultural communities in Zimbabwe. According to p'Bitek (1986:13), "men live in organisations called institutions: the family and the clan, chiefdom and kingdom or an age set system. They have a religion, any army, legal and other institutions." All these institutions are informed by, in fact built around the central ideas about what life is all about which is rooted in their social philosophy, and their world view. In this vein, Chiwome (2000) argues that marriage is a primary value since the communities in Zimbabwe are organised around the family; it is the foundation of the clan. This shows how important and integral the family institution is to the functioning of a society. In view of this exposé, the Musasa Project is failing to protect this institution of the Zimbabwean cultural communities. This is because the organisation considers divorce as an alternative where there is a conflict in the marriage institution, which is in sharp contrast to the values of the communities in Zimbabwe.

The activities of the Musasa Project seem to be ignorant of the fact that the family is a very important pillar in the lives of the Zimbabwean people. In the event of a conflict, the woman who is said to be a canonical victim is given shelter, such that when the husband comes he is now a stranger to the family, yet he is the head of that

family. The aspect of sustainable progression in the family and society at large is destroyed. In respect of the position of the marriage institution, Matambirofa (2004:97) notes that it is general expectation of members of the Zimbabwean society that no matter how 'professional' a woman may become, they must still marry and in the institution of marriage, the woman is expected to subordinate herself to her husband. This shallow thinking of viewing women as always at the receiving end in marriage shows the failure to recognise the fact that Zimbabwean woman have throughout history, shared political power with man.

NGOs, Climate and the Continued Existence of the Communities in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a country with varying climatic conditions depending with location. This is shown by the existence of five farming regions that have been identified, which suggests that the farming projects and methods, as well as the livestock suitable in the respective regions are expectedly different. Though, the climatic conditions in Zimbabwe range from favourable to unfavourable, it has been proven that every farming region is productive in its own way. Thus climate plays an enormous role in the formation of a civilisation, which is culture (Petra, 1997: 2220). However, some of the NGOs implementing farming related projects in Zimbabwe tend to ignore the varied climatic regions in Zimbabwe in their 'one size fits all' approach to development. World Vision International and CARE International irrigation schemes and input programmes respectively provide good examples to this problem. The Malole irrigation scheme of 2008 in Matabeleland epitomises this problem. The problem of water in Matabeleland is a well known fact such that any project which requires a lot of water like irrigation is not sustainable, just like what happened to this project by World Vision International which is now part history. More so, the nutrient gardens which were supposed to be put in place by this Malole project had exotic crops and trees which did not provide immediate needs for that particular community. In the agriculture sector in Zimbabwe, Matabeleland is well known for cattle ranching and small livestock farming. In this regards, the World Vision International Heifer Scheme of 2007 was in the right direction, but the problem was on the breed of the cattle which struggled to survive in the climatic conditions obtaining in this region.

The projects in some part of Masvingo province and Gweru urban have also raised questions on their applicability to supposed beneficiaries. The agricultural input distribution schemes have been implemented in Masvingo province without considering the climatic conditions obtaining in this farming region which are suitable for drought resistant crops such as sorghum, millet and rapoko. Ultimately, the region experience perennial droughts because they concentrate on crops which are not commensurate to the climate of the region. This failure by the NGOs to recognise the influence of philosophy and physical climate in shaping culture has made them to craft and implement development programs which are inappropriate and therefore not sustainable. As a result the projects did not contribute meaningfully to the development of the cultural communities in places such as Zaka and Chivi. The case of gardening projects in Gweru urban by Care International is a clear indication that needs analysis was not carried out at all. If the people of Mkoba, Senga or Mtapa high density suburbs in Gweru where involved in the construction of the Care International Gweru agenda, no-one was going to suggest gardens considering the numerous competing needs such as housing, employment, revamping of industries and urban infrastructural development. More so, it is argued that urban agriculture is responsible for the degradation of land and water resources and the exploitation of land meant for development (Bryld, 2003).).Against this background it was recognized that the NGOs do not consider

such issues out of ignorance arrogance and negligence.

CONCLUSION: NGOS, CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN ZIMBABWE

In this article, it has been observed that, the NGOs are simply means through which foreign aid is channelled to the Zimbabwean cultural communities. Though, these organisations are non-governmental as the name suggests, they lack autonomy in their operations as indicated by the alignment of their agenda with the donor's interests. Ultimately, the agenda and conditionalities of the NGOs are predetermined and totalitarian as they are developed without the dialogic involvement of the respective cultural community members in Zimbabwe. This is confirmed by the universal development approaches which are promoted by these organisations, which include issues on gender, children/women rights, agriculture, education, counseling among others as if development has got universal means and ends. It is also evident in this article that, culture is an important element in development both as a resource and as a determinant to development. Therefore, this article argues that the maintenance of the cultural capital and cultural sustainability equally important in sustainable development in Zimbabwe. It is concluded, however that, development which is campaigned for by the NGOs in Zimbabwe do not consider autonomy, self-determination and cultural freedom of the cultural communities in the country. The existence of predetermined agenda and conditionalities is a testimony to this avowal. Hence, the NGOs' agenda and conditionalities are to a larger extent inimical to cultural capital, cultural sustainability and sustainable development in Zimbabwe.

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